

I. N. Van Nuys »» 1835-1912

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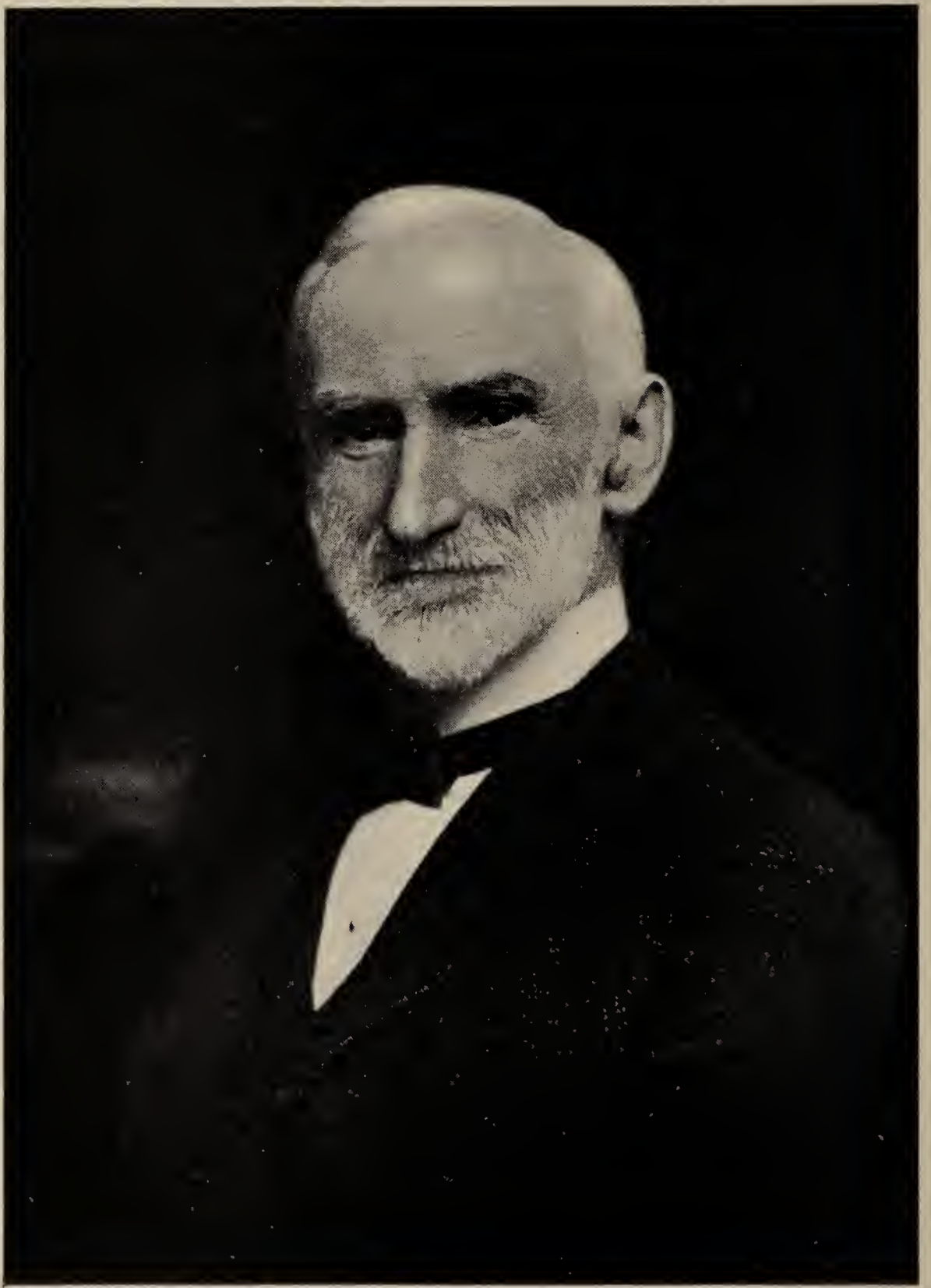
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I. N. Van Nuys ❧❧ 1835-1912



I. N. Van Nuys in 1899.

I. N. Van Nuys ❧ 1835-1912 c



LOS ANGELES ❧ NINETEEN FORTY-FOUR

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by JAMES R. PAGE

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THIS story about Mr. I. N. Van Nuys has been written for members of the Van Nuys family and their friends. It is mainly a personal narrative drawn from my memory and family records. I want to express my appreciation to Mr. J. Gregg Layne, President of the Historical Society of Southern California, for his assistance in the preparation of material relating to Los Angeles during Mr. Van Nuys' residence here and for his kind permission to reproduce several photographs from his collection.

JAMES R. PAGE

FEBRUARY 23, 1944



S.S. I. N. Van Nuys ready for launching on the night of February 23, 1944.



The S.S. I. N. Van Nuys was the 332nd ship built by the California Shipbuilding Corporation.

I. N. Van Nuys — 1835-1912

"My sister, Annis Van Nuys Schweppe, my brother, J. Benton Van Nuys, and myself are very grateful to the United States Maritime Commission and to the California Shipbuilding Corporation for naming this ship for our father. If he knew of this tribute to his memory he would be pleased to know that some of the efforts which he put in for this community were remembered. We shall follow the destiny of this ship with interest and affection and it is our wish and hope that it may be helpful in winning the war and that it may be serviceable after the peace. We thank all of the men and women who worked on this ship and wish to let them know that we appreciate what they are doing in this terrible war in which we are engaged. Good luck to the S.S. I. N. Van Nuys and to the California Shipbuilding Corporation!"



KATE VAN NUYS PAGE made these remarks at the launching of the Liberty Ship I. N. Van Nuys on February 23, 1944, at 10:30 p.m. It was the first time that a ship had been named for her father and it was the first time that Mrs. Page had made a speech.

Surrounding Mrs. Page as she gave her father's name to a living ship were members of her family and a few friends. They had come in the night to launch a ship on the flood of the tide as it filled the banks of the old Ceritos Channel. Some in the launching party remembered

those waters from happier days. Terminal Island, where the great ways lie, used to be a tiny island and sand bar where Los Angeles came to spend its summers, to sail and bathe in the unprotected waters of San Pedro's open roadstead. Across the harbor are new docks. Some of them are built on the very spot where Mr. Van Nuys loaded his first ships with San Fernando Valley wheat nearly three-quarters of a century before.

The launching of the ship affords me an opportunity to do several things that I have long wanted to do. The first is to record some of the facts of the life of Mr. Van Nuys and to discharge a debt of gratitude for the sturdy qualities of character that he has passed on to his children, with whom I have been so long associated and for whom I have such respect and affection. There are few people now alive who knew Mr. Van Nuys and the population has increased over a million since his death. It is only fair that newcomers should know of the things that the past generation has done for this community. This knowledge may give them pause in changing the names of our towns, our streets and our parks and thus destroying historical background that lends interest and charm to Southern California. I see no advantage in changing Fort Street to Broadway and Buena Vista Street to North Broadway. The early subdivider who named his streets Faith, Hope and Charity had more originality than the man who changed them to Flower, Hope and Grand. I am forced to admit that I wouldn't care to live on Charity Street but certainly there are times when our economic conditions might dictate that a street of this name would be appropriate and would be well popu-

lated. When you change the name of a town from Toluca to North Hollywood you are doing what you can to confuse history and are tying yourself to someone else's kite.

Though frequent and frivolous change of place names is destroying local history, on the other hand the naming of ships launched here for men who have been most notable among us is preservative of our best and is altogether praiseworthy. Liberty Ships so named make now a brave fleet of over three hundred, built and launched by the California Shipbuilding Corporation, and from among them I mention the following because the men whose names they bear were all friends and some of them were associates of Mr. Van Nuys:

S.S. Allan C. Balch	S.S. Lyman Stewart
S.S. Phineas Banning	S.S. Benjamin Ide Wheeler
S.S. Henry E. Huntington	S.S. Stephen M. White
S.S. William Mulholland	S.S. Frank Wiggins
S.S. Harrison Gray Otis	S.S. William Winter
S.S. Abel Stearns	S.S. William Wolfskill

It is especially fitting that among these be a vessel named for the man who first shipped a cargo from San Pedro to a foreign port—68 years ago.

I knew some of these men, and although there was a half century difference in our ages I was entertained at their homes and either did business with them or tried to do business with them.

This was particularly true of Mr. Van Nuys. My earliest recollection of him is seeing him being driven

by a mulatto man in his buckboard drawn by a pair of horses as he went from the mill at Commercial and Alameda Streets to his house on Spring Street between Seventh and Eighth, for lunch, and back again. He was a familiar figure on Spring Street as he was driven about to attend to his business and attend various meetings.

I got to know him better when he built his house at Sixth Street and Loma Drive in 1900. By this time his children were old enough to give parties and I enjoyed a great many happy times there with what are now my old friends. Mrs. Van Nuys, who was a very considerable person in her own right and a woman of strong and vigorous character, not only allowed me to come to the children's parties but almost invariably included me in the evening parties that she gave for her friends. I was greatly impressed by this mark of favor and for years was under the delusion that it was due to my personal charm. This continued until I found out the truth of the matter, which was, that I was invited in order to fix the electric lights when they went out, which they most always did. If the insurance people had ever found out that I was repairing electric light fuses with a hairpin Mrs. Van Nuys would have had her insurance cancelled. I am forced to confess that this is not the only time that Mrs. Van Nuys cut me down to size in a manner that was characteristic for its directness as well as for its effectiveness. I owe her a debt for administering this justified correction, which continued over a number of years; and I think the results were satisfactory to her, as well as beneficial to me, and it is certain that a mutual regard and affection resulted.

There was never any question in the minds of his family or in the minds of people who had occasion to know, that Mr. Van Nuys was the final authority in his family. He said very little, but what he said stayed said and was final. I am now nearly as old as Mr. Van Nuys was when I first knew him and I can appreciate his gentle patience with his children and with their friends. He presided at his dinner table and listened with quiet amusement to the wrangling of the children and their guests, and when he had enough of this he disappeared with his books and papers. After such a withdrawal he was appealed to only in important cases.

The great affection which his children had for him and their solicitude for his comfort and health were a reward for a kind and generous parent. The affection and respect which their children have for the memory of Mr. and Mrs. Van Nuys is sufficient warranty of the character of their parents.

One of the characters about the place was Nathan, the mulatto coachman. He can be seen in one of the photographs in this book. When anyone in the house would ring the bell in the stable Nathan would come and stick his head in the back hall and say, "No. What is it?" I don't know whether he got this attitude from his boss but I suspect it was a precautionary measure which had its advantages. It not infrequently happened when Nathan had driven Mrs. Van Nuys to a party in her stylish brougham that at about five o'clock he was likely to send in word to her that it was time to go home—time for him to milk the cow. This used to make Mrs. Van Nuys pretty mad but it also amused her as she

understood that he was looking after the livestock on the place.

Once I was talking with Nathan and mentioned that one of our friends had been married; he said they couldn't be married. I insisted that they were married and he said, "They can't be married; we weren't there." In due course Nathan was pensioned and died at a very advanced age in a little house provided for him at Sixth Street and Loma Drive.

ISAAC NEWTON VAN NUYS was born on the 20th of November, 1835, on his father's farm near West Sparta in Livingston County, New York. His father was Peter Van Nuys and his mother Harriet Kerr Van Nuys. The Van Nuys were Holland Dutch and had lived in New York state from colonial days. Peter was the son of Isaac, and undoubtedly Mr. Van Nuys was named for his grandfather. Isaac Van Nuys served in the Colonial Wars as a private in Captain Aarth Van Pelt's company of Kings County militia in the colony of New York in 1715. Other relatives of Peter Van Nuys were Sergeant John Van Northwick and Isaac Brokaw, soldiers in the Second Battalion, Somerset County militia, in the Revolutionary War.

Peter Van Nuys and Harriet Kerr Van Nuys had in addition to their son, Isaac Newton, three other sons, Amos Benton, Webster Brokaw and Herbert Kerr, and two daughters, Melissa and Emily. Two other children were born who died in infancy.

I. N. Van Nuys was raised on his father's farm, attended public school at West Sparta and later a finishing school at the Academy of Lima in New York. He was born a farmer and lived and worked on his father's farm until he was thirty years old. And though he developed other interests, at heart he was always a farmer, and making the land produce was his great interest. In his later life, when he was no longer dependent on the

crops for his livelihood, when his children wanted any particularly expensive thing he used always to tell them they could have it if it rained.

All his life Mr. Van Nuys suffered from asthma and in 1865 he came to California to see if the climate would help him. But no doubt the fame of California's climate and agriculture and the possibility of making the land produce had something to do with his decision to leave his home and try his fortune in California. He undertook this considerable adventure by going to New York and taking a boat to Panama; he crossed the Isthmus and again by boat came up the coast to San Francisco. About this time there was a general settling up of the old Mexican land grants in the counties north of San Francisco Bay, and his attention was drawn to the district around Napa. He finally settled in the beautiful Berryessa Valley where the old California Berryessa family had lived since the early Mexican period. In this valley, between Napa City and Old Sonoma, there was a little settlement started in the fall of 1866—a dwelling or two, a blacksmith shop, and, late in the spring of 1867, a hotel. The settlement was named Monticello. Mr. Van Nuys thought this was a good place for a general merchandise store, so he started one. It was apparently a one-man operation and he fixed himself up living quarters in the back of the store. He used to tell how he was routed out of bed one morning about five o'clock by someone pounding on the door. He got up, put on his overcoat, opened the door, and found two small boys who had a nickel to spend. Despite the inconvenience and annoyance, I have no doubt the boys got a good nickel's worth.

The Vallejo *Chronicle* of the time gave this description of the Berryessa Valley: "We take the stage from Napa and ride 'over the hills and far away' until we reach Monticello, the little village at the southern end of the valley. A straggling village it is, with its one store, post office, two hostelryes, school house, ubiquitous Chinese washhouse, and the dark accessories of every California village—saloons. The inhabitants are most kindly, but they like to know how old you are and where you were born. But farther up the valley widens in every sense, and such a lovely valley it is!—broad fields 'dressed in living green,' foothills beautiful with tender grass, and grand old mountains that stand as sentries on either side, over which sunshine and shadow play these fair April days."

Mr. Van Nuys while conducting his store had an opportunity to learn California farming, to sell small implements to the local ranchers, and to become generally and favorably known in the new community. It was while operating this store that Mr. Van Nuys met his future partner who turned out also to be his future father-in-law. This was Mr. Isaac Lankershim, a native of Bavaria who was just as much a farmer as Mr. Van Nuys. The two men became fast and lasting friends.

Isaac Lankershim had come to California in 1850, having driven a team of young horses across the plains from Missouri. Shortly after he made the acquaintance of Mr. Van Nuys, Mr. Lankershim bought a large ranch in Fresno county and in 1868 purchased the 16,000-acre El Cajon rancho in San Diego county. He had acquired several other properties in the north end of the state and

he persuaded Mr. Van Nuys to supervise the northern end of his projects in addition to operating the store. During numerous trips up and down the state between his various properties Mr. Lankershim became interested in the San Fernando Valley. At this time the valley was devoted largely to cattle raising although some sheep were being introduced into this district. He consulted with Mr. Van Nuys about the possibilities of the purchase of this ranch and Mr. Van Nuys was impressed by the report of the height of the wild oats and the agricultural possibilities of the valley. Mr. Lankershim suggested that he join him in trying to acquire part or all of the great Rancho Ex-Mission San Fernando which covered practically the whole valley named after the Mission San Fernando.

In 1869 Mr. Lankershim formed a syndicate known as "The San Fernando Farm Homestead Association," incorporated June 22, 1869. On July 2, 1869, the association bought the lower half of the Rancho Ex-Mission San Fernando from Pio Pico, to whom it had been conveyed in 1862 by his brother, General Andres Pico. For about 60,000 acres they paid \$115,000. Part of this money was Mr. Lankershim's, part was obtained from the sale of some other properties, and part was obtained from a syndicate of private bankers in San Francisco.

Since the rancho had been confirmed to Eulogio de Celis by the U. S. Land Commission, showing title to 116,858.43 acres, and since the southern part had been deeded by him to the Picos, who had in turn sold to the new land association, a friendly action for partition was brought against the heirs of de Celis, and, by decree of

the District Court in 1871, full title to the southern portion of the great valley was awarded to the new San Fernando Farm Homestead Association.

Mr. Van Nuys did not come south immediately after the purchase in 1869, as it was Mr. Lankershim's part of the business to take care of the gigantic cattle and sheep operation which seemed to have been included with their purchase. The sheep industry at that time was almost a craze in Southern California. Within a year or two the name of the association was changed to "San Fernando Sheep Company," for at that time their farming operations were not started; most of the valley, moreover, was generally thought to be good only for sheep raising. It is said that in 1873 there were over forty thousand sheep feeding on the San Fernando Valley ranges.

But the drought of 1874-75 put an end to the sheep business, as nearly all of the sheep died before they could be rounded up and driven into the Sierras where feed and water were plentiful. Judge Ijams, an old-timer, said you could walk from one end of the valley to the other on the bones of dead sheep.

In 1871 Mr. Van Nuys sold his store at Monticello and came south to take an active and responsible part in the management of their great farming projects. During the next five years he demonstrated his knowledge of farming. This was probably one of the crucial periods in his life and required foresight, courage and judgment.

He was only 36 years old when he arrived in Los Angeles county to take over and to grow wheat where wheat had not been grown successfully before. He was

convinced that wheat could be and would be a profitable crop for the rich soil of the valley. Against the advice of all the old-timers—among them Judge Jonathan R. Scott, who had made numerous attempts to raise wheat from the city limits far up the Los Angeles River valley without success—and warned by the rancheros that grain planted in the valley would be blighted by the dreaded red rust, Mr. Van Nuys proceeded to choose his seed stock and select his ground carefully.

The droughts of 1874 and 1875 nearly ended the experiment. His seed crop was a total loss. But in 1876 enough wheat was raised to ship two full cargoes from the little port of San Pedro to Liverpool, the first wheat from Southern California ever to be shipped abroad. Thus I. N. Van Nuys recovered the losses of the drought years, introduced a new and profitable type of farming to Los Angeles County, and became the first to use the harbor of San Pedro as a world port of embarkation for grain.



San Pedro Harbor in 1873, about two years before Mr. Van Nuys shipped his first cargoes of San Fernando Valley wheat to Liverpool.



Headed for the corral, Sheep Ranch, 1900.

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ITH still more zeal Mr. Van Nuys continued to develop his holdings in the San Fernando Valley, establishing headquarters at different locations on the great ranch, generally naming each after the foreman under whose supervision that particular ranch might be.

The first farming operation was started in 1874 and centered around the Home Ranch about two miles west of the present town of Van Nuys. The West Ranch was three or four miles farther west on the site of the present town of Reseda. The Workman Ranch was still farther west, about a mile west of the town of Owensmouth, now called Canoga Park. These ranches were the three upon which farming operations were started and financed by Mr. Van Nuys personally. The Patton Ranch, now the site of Tarzana at Reseda Way and Ventura Boulevard, and the Kestor Ranch, about a mile and a half southwest of the present town of Van Nuys, were started by Isaac Lankershim and largely financed by him. The old Sheep Ranch, lying between Ventura Boulevard and the Los Angeles River, just north of the present Harvard Military Academy, was the last of the ranches to be turned to farming and was maintained by the Association for pasture land. The Clyman Ranch was a part of 12,000 acres sold by the Association in 1888 to be laid out as the town of Toluca, soon to become Lankershim, and today is North Hollywood.

Naturally these seven large ranches within the great San Fernando Ranch took all of the time of Mr. Van Nuys, for though each was under a competent superintendent, close supervision of the whole was necessary.

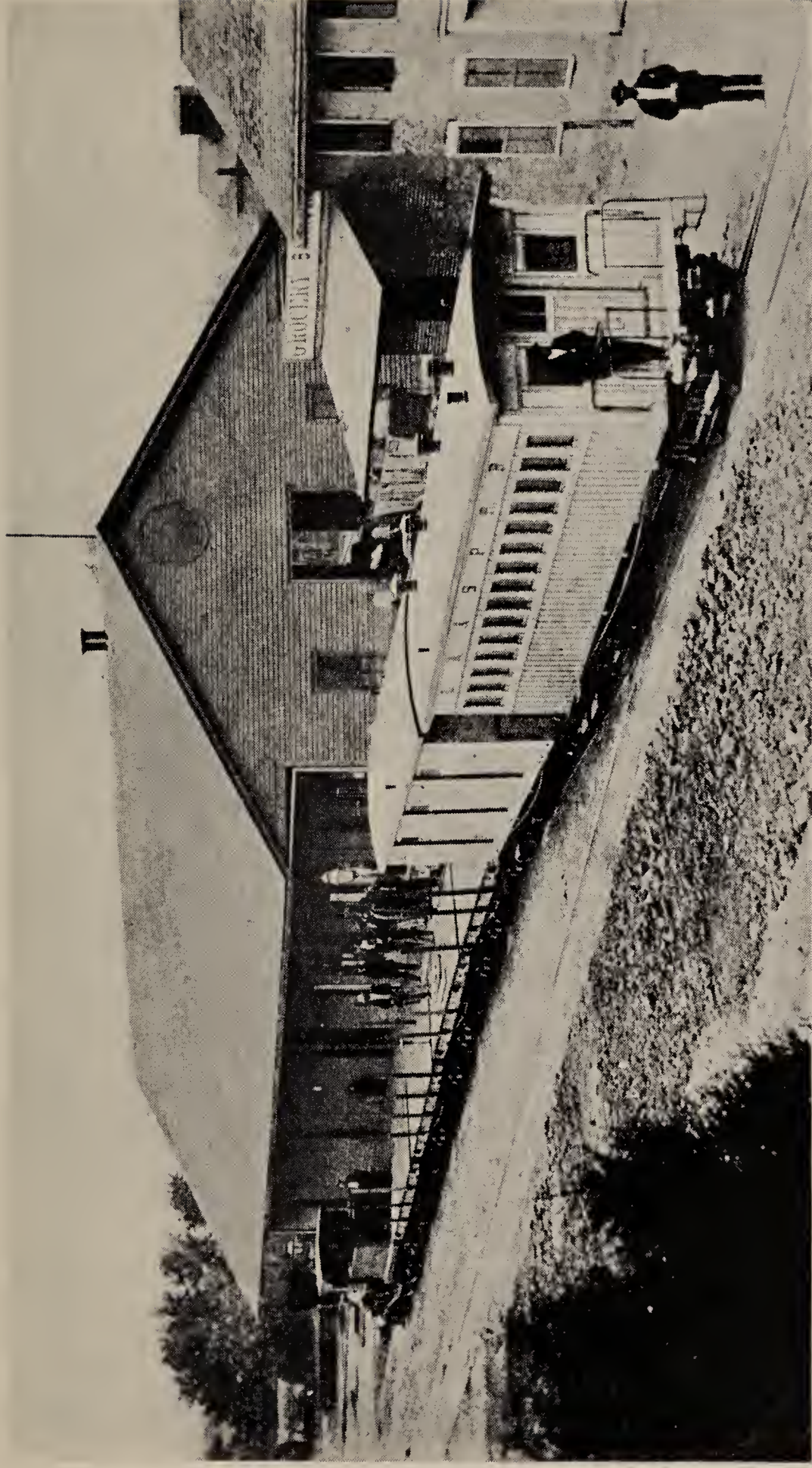
Always seeking more efficient means for perfecting their great enterprise, Mr. Van Nuys and Mr. Lankershim built the first real wagon road through Sepulveda Canyon, in 1874 and 1875, following the old Mission trail of the Padres, to shorten their haul from the ranches to the port of San Pedro. Little did they dream that their children would see the magnificent boulevard that today follows that same route.

Mr. Van Nuys was just a little past forty when his wheat-raising scheme had passed the stage of experiment and early failure to become a large and profitable enterprise. In a dozen years he had risen from the newly-arrived country-store keeper of Monticello to become the active directing head of one of the big farming enterprises of the West. Practically his whole life had been that of a farmer, but now his success with the ranches was to open new opportunities in the little town of Los Angeles.

By the year 1878 the production of wheat in the San Fernando Valley had become so great that the partners decided to build a flour mill to grind their own grain. From the Southern Pacific Railroad Company they bought property at the southwest corner of Commercial and Alameda Streets in Los Angeles. A mill was built on this site primarily to process their own grain. The new enterprise was named the Los Angeles Farming and Milling Company. When it began, in 1878, Mr. Van

Nuys ceased to live on the San Fernando Home Ranch and became a resident of the little city of Los Angeles, making his home at the St. Charles Hotel, the first hotel of the Pueblo. It was between the Plaza and the Temple Block, about the center of the business section. It had been known in earlier times as the Bella Union, and was torn down just a year or two ago.

I^N 1878 the population of Los Angeles was about eleven thousand and the operations of the Los Angeles Farming and Milling Company were of considerable importance. Mr. Van Nuys added to his reputation as a farmer the reputation of being a sound business man and a good operator with his own wheat. The profits from both these operations were considerable and with foresight he began investing in real estate with an eye to the future growth of Los Angeles. Whether it was because of business foresight or matrimonial foresight, he purchased from Mr. M. J. Newmark in December, 1879, one of the best houses then in Los Angeles. This was a two and a half story house located far out of town in the middle of the block on Spring Street between Seventh and Eighth. The house had cost \$7500 to build, a large sum in those days. Mr. Van Nuys bought the house and lot for \$6000 and the adjoining sixty-foot lot on the north side for an additional \$500. Then to round out his own property he bought from Judge Sepulveda for \$2000 the adjoining lot which made his property come to the corner of Seventh and Spring Streets; so that the original investment in land on which the I. N. Van Nuys Building stands was \$8500. Whether the purchase was made in view of his approaching marriage to his partner's daughter or whether the acquisition of the property enabled him to close the deal with her, is not known. In any event, he married Susanna H.



Train of the Los Angeles and San Pedro Railroad at the Commercial and Alameda depot. On this site the mill of the Los Angeles Farming and Milling Company was erected in 1878.



The Bella Union Hotel on Main Street, as it appeared in 1876. It was the first hotel in Los Angeles, originally being a one-story adobe building. Later a second floor was added, and eventually a third. It was renamed the St. Charles Hotel and it was here that Mr. Van Nuys was married on February 10, 1880 to Susanna H. Lankershim.

Lankershim on February 10, 1880, at the old St. Charles Hotel two months after he had exercised this foresight and judgment.

At this location Mr. and Mrs. Van Nuys spent many happy years and all of their three children were born there: a daughter, Annis (Mrs. Richard J. Schweppe); a son, J. Benton Van Nuys; and a second daughter, Kate (Mrs. James R. Page). Mr. Van Nuys was forty-five years old when he married, was a man of mature judgment and knew his own mind. Mrs. Van Nuys told me that when she married Mr. Van Nuys she made up her mind to do what he told her to do and that she had always done it. The plan apparently worked well for they were happily married.

In those days, as has been the habit of Los Angeles since, the city was trying to make up its mind where the residential section should be. There was an attractive district in Boyle Heights, another along Downey Avenue, a newer and quite fashionable district on West Adams Street, and a still newer and attractive district around Westlake Park. All of these had their violent advocates. The old-timers looked down their noses at all of the new locations and continued to live on Main Street, Spring Street, and Fort Street. Some people of distinguished social attributes occupied apartments in the Arcadia deBaker Block on North Main at Arcadia Street.

Mrs. Van Nuys told me that she once signed a petition to keep the streetcars off Spring Street so that the street would be safe for the children in the neighborhood. In her later life when there was a question as to her judgment in buying real estate I used to refer to her fore-

sight in regard to keeping the car line off Spring Street.

In Boyle Heights the friends of Mr. and Mrs. Van Nuys were the Hollenbecks, Workmans, and especially Judge and Mrs. Stephen C. Hubbell whose beautiful garden was a great attraction. Smoke from the gas works on Aliso Street finally drove the Hubbells to the Westlake District. Judge and Mrs. Hubbell had two daughters, who were about the same age as Mrs. Van Nuys' daughters. They have been intimate friends since their earliest childhood.

Next to Mr. Van Nuys' mill on Alameda and Commercial Streets was the Perry Lumber Company. Mr. Perry had an attractive family and all of the older readers will remember his daughter, Mrs. Modini Wood, as queen of the Fiesta. She was a very handsome and charming woman and for that matter she still is. His other daughter, Mrs. Perne Johnson, was also a very handsome woman and the amiable characteristics of Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Johnson have been passed on to their children.

In the West Adams district their friends were the Henry T. Lees, John Wigmore, Judge W. P. Gardner, the E. P. Clarks, Mr. Jonathan S. Slauson, his daughters Mrs. Macneil and Mrs. Vosburg, the Dan McFarlands and the Charles Ellises, Mr. Ellis having been the founder of the Ellis Club. Also there was Mrs. Caroline Severance (the mother of women's clubs) and Mr. and Mrs. Mark Sibley Severance. Mrs. Mark Sibley Severance was a great horsewoman, very fond of driving a tandem, participating in horse shows and generally promoting a good time for her friends. Mr. Severance was a most charming

and handsome man. He gave a piece of property located at Adams and Figueroa Streets for St. John's Church and his photograph hangs in the vestry among the choir in which he sang during the nineties. The Severances had two sprightly daughters with whom we are pleased to be friends today. At this time the people who lived in these districts were relatively newcomers and the old-timers really formed the inner ten.

At the southeast corner of Sixth and Main Streets where the Pacific Electric Building now stands was Mr. George Kerckhoff's house. On the northeast corner of Sixth and Main, Mr. W. G. Kerckhoff lived. On the southwest corner of the same streets lived Mrs. John F. Francis, née Dominguez. Further up the street at the southwest corner of Fourth and Main Mr. I. W. Hellman lived. At the corner of Third and Main lived Captain Cameron Erskine Thom. He had a large and attractive family and his children are our friends today. Somewhere in this district lived Mrs. Solano and the Motts. Farther up Main Street in the Baker Block lived Mr. and Mrs. John Plater, Dr. and Mrs. McGowan, and Mrs. Mary A. Briggs. At the corner of Second and Fort lived Judge O'Melveny, father of Mr. Henry W. O'Melveny. At Third and Fort Mr. J. A. Graves and his family lived until they moved to the ranch in Alhambra in 1889. Near Mr. Graves lived Mr. J. M. Griffith, his father-in-law, Mr. Eugene Meyer, and Mr. Harris Newmark. Near to Mr. Van Nuys on Spring Street lived Mr. M. A. Newmark and adjoining Mr. Newmark on the south lived Mr. Kaspere Cohn. I wish there were time and space

to write a monograph on Mr. Kaspare Cohn. He was a most highly respected man and the history of his life and accomplishments would make interesting reading. When I knew him he was engaged in the private banking business and eventually accumulated so many deposits in his private bank that the state banking department insisted on his incorporating his business. Today it is the Union Bank & Trust Company, of which his son-in-law, Mr. Ben R. Meyer, is President, and his other son-in-law, Mr. Milton Getz, is Vice-President. Mr. Kaspare Cohn and Mr. Van Nuys participated in financing a number of projects and were very helpful to Mr. W. G. Kerckhoff and Mr. Allan C. Balch in the financing in the early days of the San Gabriel Electric Company. During the last years of Mr. Van Nuys' life Mr. Cohn used to call on him every Sunday morning and bring him a squab. His children and Mr. Van Nuys' children were and still are warm and affectionate friends.

I have limited the names included in this simple biography to persons whom I myself knew and it is in no sense a Blue Book of these times. Well known and prominent people are dealt with in other places and I could do nothing to add to the luster of their accomplishments.

In 1888 Mr. and Mrs. Van Nuys took their children to the opening of the Coronado Hotel. In 1938 their children were at the hotel joining in the Fiftieth Anniversary of this opening. The clothing they wore as children was displayed in Magnin's window in the lobby of the hotel and was an amusing and interesting contribution to the occasion.

In the summer time it was Mrs. Van Nuys' custom to



The southeast corner of Seventh and Broadway in 1886. In the picture are Mrs. Lankershim and her grandchildren, Annis, Benton and Kate.



I. N. Van Nuys residence at the southwest corner of Seventh and Spring in 1886.

take the children to Bartlett Springs or some other resort and Mr. Van Nuys took up residence at the California Club. I suppose this afforded a vacation for both.

I don't know what the old gentleman did in the evenings but I imagine that he joined in a game of whist rather than a poker game if there was one going on. From his temperament I know that he did not care to take money from people where he had not earned it; and contrarywise, he had no desire to make a contribution under similar conditions. The parties I think largely consisted of dinners and I know of one or two occasions when Al Levy pushed his cart to the side door, brought in the oysters and opened them in the kitchen. Cocktails were not in vogue and the drinking was left to the men. There was plenty of good champagne at dinner topped off with some good brandy or Lucky Baldwin's apricot cordial followed by a game of whist or hearts and everybody home about twelve o'clock out of consideration for the horses. There were picnics at the ranch, to which people drove in tallyhos, and they usually included those I have mentioned plus a few attractive bachelors. Mr. Henry O'Melveny has left a reputation as being the most eligible and attractive of these. He was a good lawyer. He and Mr. J. A. Graves were partners and had the best clientele in the city. They were partners until Mr. Graves dissolved the partnership in order to become President of the Farmers & Merchants Bank, which position he held until his death. Mr. O'Melveny continued his law practice, retained his old clientele, and his business became the most important law business in Los Angeles. His position in the community was unique. He enjoyed

the complete confidence of almost everyone, many conflicting interests were in his office and he adjudicated the matters, representing all parties, to the great satisfaction of all concerned. His place will not be filled.

MR. ISAAC LANKERSHIM died in April, 1882, and from this time the entire management of the Los Angeles Farming and Milling Company and the operation of the ranches became the responsibility of Mr. Van Nuys. In addition to this he had the administration of the affairs of Mr. Lankershim's estate. Mrs. Lankershim, his mother-in-law, lived with him. It was natural that he should advise and direct the business of his mother-in-law and of his wife and these were matters of considerable proportions. There were three interests: his wife's, his mother-in-law's, and his own. These were always kept separate during his lifetime. Mrs. Lankershim had her property and her business, Mrs. Van Nuys had hers, and Mr. Van Nuys looked after his own investments, ran the mill and the ranches. This was done during all of his life. There never was any mingling of funds or question of ownership. Mrs. Van Nuys had her idea of what should be done in the way of her investments and expressed herself; but, as she said when she married Mr. Van Nuys, she made up her mind to do what he told her to do.

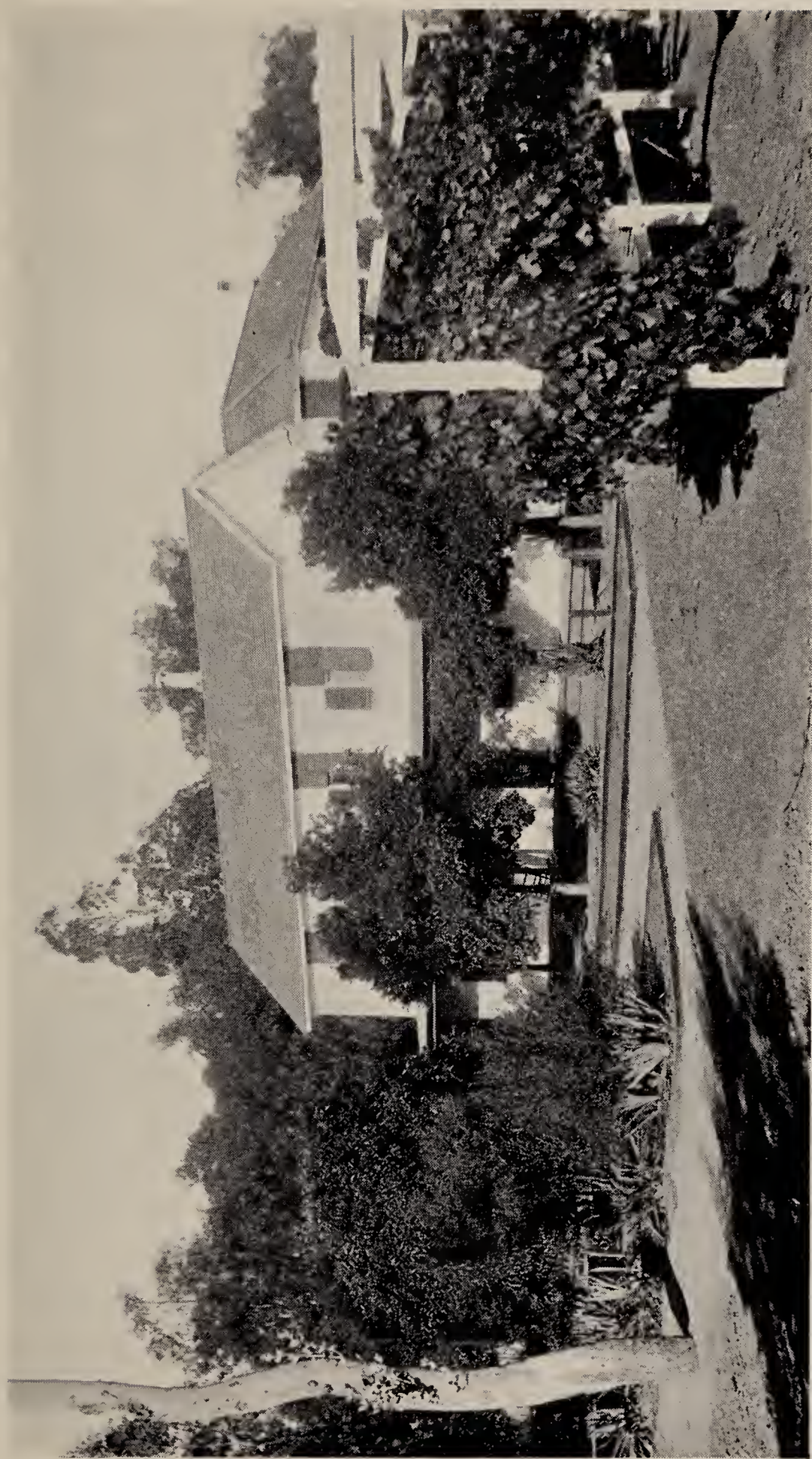
At the time Mr. Van Nuys purchased his property at Seventh and Spring Streets Mrs. Van Nuys had suggested that he purchase the northwest corner of Seventh and Figueroa; but I note that they did purchase Seventh and Spring. This, of course, was Mr. Van Nuys' investment; but the thing that caused the definite decision was the

fact that Mr. Van Nuys said that he would not go so far into the country. Mrs. Van Nuys had extraordinary good judgment in her business affairs and, coupled with Mr. Van Nuys' ability, the results were successful.

The operation of the ranches and the mill involved a great deal of time and Mr. Van Nuys spent one week out of each month making a thorough inspection of the seven ranch stations. In his buckboard behind a span of fine horses he would go from one ranch to the other until he had covered each of his ranches in the valley. The first day was pretty well occupied in getting to the Home Ranch. The regular round of inspection kept him in close touch and familiar with every detail of the operation. Before Mr. Van Nuys' death his son was inspecting the ranches by automobile in two days. It is a long step from horse-drawn streetcars to automobiles, airplanes, long-distance telephone, radio, electrically operated machinery and all of the improvements which are due to technological development and Yankee ingenuity.

It took seven giant combined harvesters operating continuously from May until November each year to reap and harvest the annual crops. In 1888 the San Fernando rancho produced 510,000 bushels of wheat. At the close of each harvesting Mr. Van Nuys had his machinery thoroughly overhauled, greased, and put under cover. This was unusual in California but it indicates the detailed care which he exercised over any business that was entrusted to him.

In 1883 the Board of Trade of Los Angeles was organized in the offices of the Los Angeles Produce Exchange in the Arcadia Block on Los Angeles Street.



The Home Ranch.

On March 9th Mr. Van Nuys was elected to the first Board of Directors, his associates being C. W. Gilson, A. Haas, Harris Newmark, M. Dodsworth, and Walter S. Maxwell. On March 14th the Board was formally incorporated. Mr. Van Nuys also served as a member of the Board of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce in 1899.

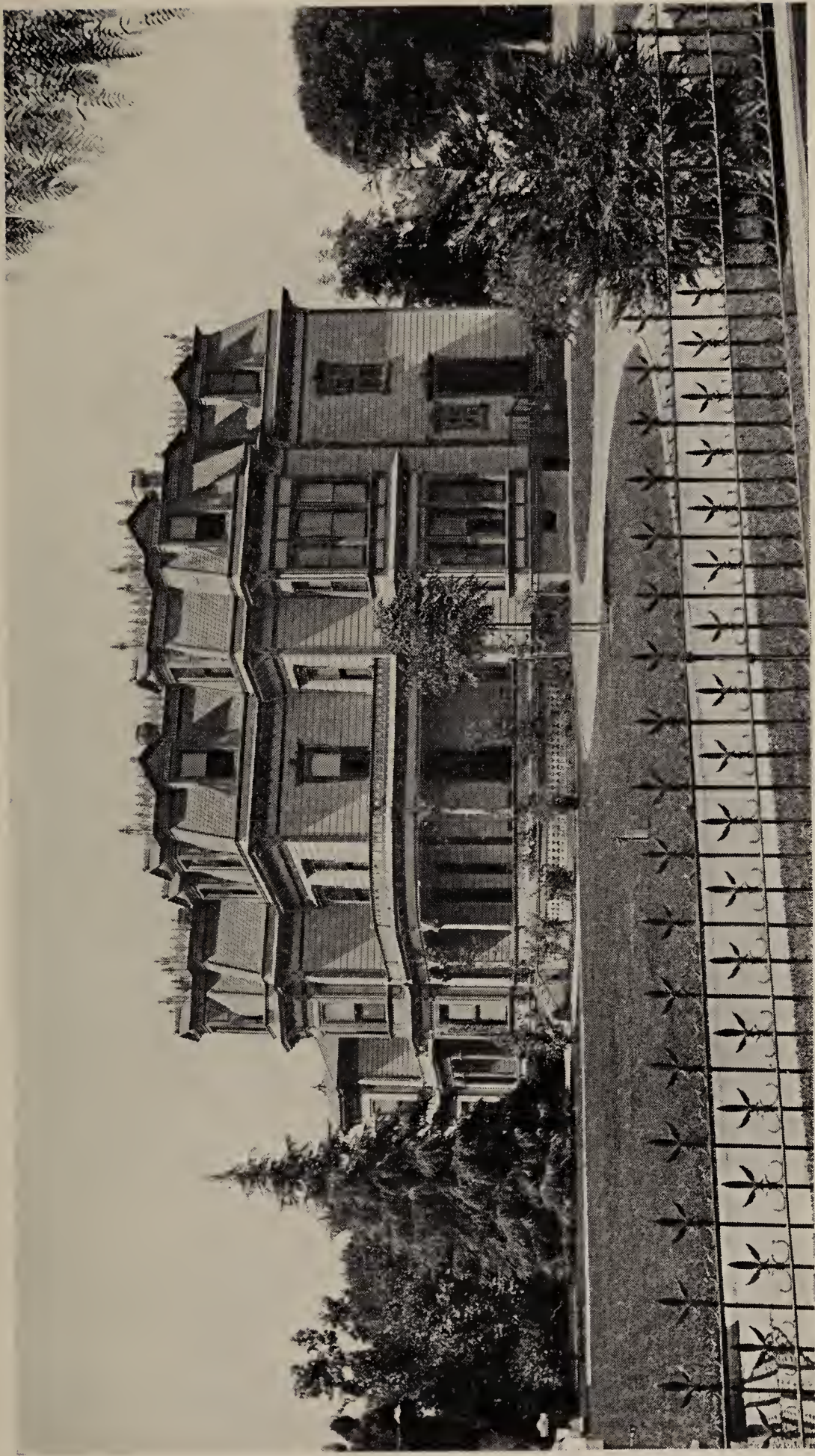
In 1888 Mr. Van Nuys sold 12,000 acres at the east end of the great ranch to a newly formed syndicate, the Lankershim Ranch Land and Water Company, whose directors were L. T. Garnsey, F. C. Garbett, S. W. Luitweiler, Wm. Bogel, C. W. Smith and W. S. De Van, all prominently identified with the development of Los Angeles. By May of that year the whole of the 12,000 acres, whose westerly boundary is the present-day Whitsett Avenue, had been subdivided into tracts of various sizes, chiefly forty-acre farms. These tracts were put on the market at prices ranging from \$5 to \$150 an acre. The town soon grew up and at first was called Toluca for the lovely little lake that lay near by. A post office was established there by that name but was almost immediately changed by request of the residents to the name of Lankershim. For some time the settlement received its mail at Toluca but got off the train at Lankershim; the community is now North Hollywood.

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THE great influx of settlers brought to Southern California during the boom now began to cause endless trouble for the Van Nuys family, as well as for the Maclays and Porters, who held the northern side of the San Fernando Valley, when the many who had been disappointed in obtaining land, or had lost what they had when the boom collapsed, attempted to squat throughout the fertile San Fernando Valley, both north and south.

In 1890 Mr. Jackson A. Graves, formerly attorney for both the Van Nuyses and the Maclays and Porters, stated that some 1,200 squatters attempted to file claims on the Los Angeles Farming and Milling Company's lands, violently taking possession and driving off stock. The northern half of the valley also experienced its share of squatter trouble, and Mr. Porter, who was "an explosive individual" and ready to protect his rights by force, if necessary, had his men ready at all times, with wagons and arms, to gather up everything the squatters had brought, haul it off the ranch and dump it onto the county road.

Mr. Van Nuys would not countenance violence of any kind on the part of his employees, although the three hundred at the seven different ranch stations, who had suffered every type of insult and bullying at the hands of the squatters, would have been only too glad of a chance to oust them as had been done in the north half



I. N. Van Nuys residence at the southwest corner of Seventh and Spring as rebuilt in 1890.



At the launching of the S.S. I. N. Van Nuys, from left to right: Mrs. Annis Van Nuys Schweppe, Mr. J. Benton Van Nuys and Mrs. Kate Van Nuys Page.

of the valley. But Mr. Van Nuys claimed the law owed him and must afford him protection, and so Mr. Graves as his attorney brought suit against several of the squatters. A verdict for the plaintiff was won, but an appeal was made by the squatters in the Supreme Court of the State, which they lost. However, undaunted, they appealed to the United States Supreme Court and again lost. This ended the matter as far as squatter trouble was concerned. This litigation entailed much expensive preparation for the various suits, even to a resurvey of the ranch, eventually costing the Los Angeles Farming and Milling Company for this unjust litigation more than \$50,000 in court costs and attorneys' fees.

An amusing incident is recited by Mr. Harry Chandler, a prime mover years later among the purchasers of the Van Nuys holdings, which not only reveals the close care and character of Mr. I. N. Van Nuys, but shows how the pendulum may swing. Mr. Chandler had come to California as a young man to fight for his health, and obtained employment on the small fruit ranch of John Gower, where Hollywood is today located. Mr. Gower gave Mr. Chandler permission to sell what fruit he might pick, and suggested that he go over to the wheat farm in San Fernando Valley, where the employees would welcome an opportunity to buy fresh fruit.

Taking his employer's advice, Mr. Chandler loaded a small wagon, made his way to the old Sheep Ranch, and was doing a brisk business with the ranch hands when a horseman, evidently a foreman, rode up and ordered Mr. Chandler to pack up and get off the ranch immediately, which without delay he did, feeling that the

world was truly against him. Hardly had he cleared the property and was on the highway when he again heard the clatter of hoofs, and looking around saw his recent persecutor pursuing him. The horseman overtook him and in the kindest possible manner apologized to Mr. Chandler, saying he thought that the stranger was another bootlegger, as many had recently caused them trouble, and asked him to return at any time to sell his fruit. The horseman was Mr. I. N. Van Nuys, the owner of the great ranch, and a friendship thereupon started that culminated in the onetime fruit peddler becoming one of the owners of the ranch from which he had been ejected.

IF THE wheat crop was good or the mill showed a profit, or a part of the big ranch was sold, as in 1888, then there was money to invest. Toward the end of the century Mr. Van Nuys and a few of his friends each held substantial sums of cash, which was constantly being loaned with little formality to younger men who had come to develop the modern Southern California. For practical purposes they were private bankers, giving in their day a constructive financial help that the young commercial banks were not yet ready to give.

Mr. Van Nuys had had spare funds to lend or invest in a few personal enterprises for a number of years. In 1890 he purchased much of the property where the city of Huntington Park stands today, and sold it to Henry E. Huntington in 1904. He had bought a lot on Spring Street between Fourth and Fifth in 1886 and erected a class A building upon it for Barker Brothers in 1898. In 1887 Mr. Van Nuys bought the home place of Colonel James G. Howard on the northwest corner of Fourth and Main Streets, and in 1896 erected the famed Van Nuys Hotel upon it—a hotel that long headed the list of fashionable hostelries in Los Angeles. From 1900 until his death Mr. Van Nuys continued to buy property and erect substantial buildings to order for his tenants. He once made the statement that he would improve to the tenants' tastes any piece of property he owned, pro-

vided the tenant could assure him a reasonable return on his investment.

In the middle nineties the home place at Seventh and Spring Streets was found too close to the fast encroaching business district for the peace of mind of the Van Nuys family, so a new homesite was sought. The location decided upon was a sightly spot on the north side of West Sixth Street at Loma Drive, where a large house was built in 1899-1900, a residence that the family continued to occupy until the death of Mrs. Van Nuys, some ten years after the passing of her husband.

Besides his active interest in the Los Angeles Farming and Milling Company, Mr. Van Nuys was a director of the Los Angeles Pressed Brick Company, the Union Bank of Savings, and for years he had been a director of the conservative old Farmers and Merchants Bank. When in 1903 it was incorporated as the Farmers and Merchants National Bank of Los Angeles, he was elected to the office of Vice-President, which he held until his death.

Finally, in 1910, the Los Angeles Farming and Milling Company sold the remaining 47,000 acres of their great rancho to a new syndicate, the Los Angeles Suburban Home Company, headed by Messrs. Harry Chandler, H. J. Whitley, M. H. Sherman, General Harrison Gray Otis, and O. F. Brandt, for \$2,500,000, the deal being handled for the sellers by J. Benton Van Nuys, his father's failing health having caused his partial retirement from active business life. And so the great wheat empire built up by Mr. Van Nuys through forty successful years was laid out in townsites and small farms,

and San Fernando Valley became the thriving suburb for the ever-growing metropolis of Los Angeles.

The auction sale of stock and equipment belonging to the ranch was the greatest that had ever been held in the State of California; two thousand horses and mules, ten combined harvesters, six threshing machines, four complete blacksmith shops, four complete harness shops, and hundreds of heavy farm wagons, gang-plows, harrows, and mowing machines were sold. The auction took four days and some two thousand stockmen and farmers participated in the bidding. Six steers were slaughtered each day to provide a free barbecue luncheon.

After the family moved away from the old home at Seventh and Spring Streets a series of small buildings, providing enough income to pay taxes, had been erected on the Seventh and Spring Street property. In 1911 Mr. Van Nuys cleared the site and started the erection of a modern office building of the finest type. Known as the I. N. Van Nuys Building, this eleven-story structure covers a half block on Seventh Street between Spring and Broadway, and has one of the largest floor-space areas in the city. Unhappily, Mr. Van Nuys passed away on February 12, 1912, before the completion of the building.

THE men for whom the California Shipbuilding Corporation has named some of its ships were giants in their time. From generation to generation human nature and human ability changes but little; the change is one of tempo, facilities, and technique. These men of the seventies, eighties, and nineties would view with astonished approval the accomplishments of their descendants and successors.

Mr. Van Nuys took up his permanent residence in Los Angeles in 1871. It is interesting to note the developments that came to Los Angeles at about this time:

- 1867 the first gas light was installed in Los Angeles.
- 1868 the first bank was opened and there were only five towns in the county: San Gabriel, Los Angeles, El Monte, Anaheim, and Wilmington.
- 1869 the first railroad was built to San Pedro.
- 1874 the first street railway was built.
- 1876 the Southern Pacific completed its line from San Francisco to Los Angeles, thus connecting this town with the east.
- 1882 the first telephones were put into service. (The Mill number was 24).
- 1886 the streets were first lighted with electricity.
- 1892 the first commercial oil well was sunk.
- 1899 work was begun on the Los Angeles harbor.
- 1900 the United States census showed the population of Los Angeles to be 102,479.

Mr. John A. McCone, President and General Manager of the California Shipbuilding Corporation, has in his shipyard about five times as many people as the total population of Los Angeles when Mr. Van Nuys arrived here. The S.S. *I. N. Van Nuys* was the 332nd ship launched by this corporation. As a director, intimately acquainted with the affairs of a steel company engaged in similar work and without asking any embarrassing questions of the California Shipbuilding Corporation, I can estimate the amount of work in dollars which this yard is turning out. A 10,800-ton Liberty class ship costs about \$1,500,000. Therefore, this yard in about two years has built and delivered to the government approximately \$498,000,000 of ships. From public records it is known that they have a backlog of work to be done of about the same amount so that their production, should the war last another year and a half, will be about one billion dollars. The shipbuilding business in which I am interested has just about the same production. There are other shipyards with large contracts and when one reflects on the production of the airplane companies one realizes that the production in the Los Angeles area runs into billions of dollars.

The official cost of the Panama Canal as of June 30, 1921, was \$525,812,661. The Boulder Dam, its power installation and Boulder City officially cost \$130,000,000. These figures emphasize the productive ability of the present generation and they also emphasize the enormous cost and waste of war. Let us hope that the succeeding generations will be giants in their ability to pay the costs incurred in defending the rights and liberties that we

have inherited. Let us trust that to cope with these problems there may be men of such sagacity and probity as Isaac N. Van Nuys.

